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The White House

A. VOLLMAR

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THE WHITE HOUSE

A STORY

BY

A. VOLLMAR

ROCK ISLAND, ILL.
AUGUSTANA BOOK CONCERN

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I.

Journey not without a guide,
Nor without a pilot sail!
Dangers great may thee assail;
Seek God's aid whate'er betide.

"Miss Ulrica Bredenberg is hereby cited to appear in person at the courthouse in B., on the 16th inst., at 10 a. m., to receive a legacy bequeathed to her by her brother who died in the local hospital on the 12th inst."

Such was the notice held in trembling hands by old Ulrica, whose dim eyes were now finishing a third reading of the document.

"So he has lived so long," she mused — "and now he is dead! Not a word from him for forty years — and then to return home only to die. Hm, in the hospital, I see — so poor as all that! If he had only sent me a line, I would have fetched him here: in the 'White House' there is plenty of room both to live and to die. Poor creature! What do I want of the few rags that he left — they were welcome to keep them, I'm sure. But perhaps they need some money for the funeral expenses. I suppose he hadn't a friend in all the world. Well, at all events, he's got his old sister, and the least that she can do is to settle any accounts against his name."

So mused old Ulrica, sitting alone in her large well-appointed living room. Ever since the death of her parents

many years ago she had lived a life so secluded that she had almost forgotten that she had a brother. And who can blame her? In forty years the grass of forgetfulness grows tall in the heart as well as on the grave, and these last thirty years, at least, Henry Bredenberg was commonly considered lost and dead. How strange that until a few days ago Ulrica really had a brother whose right it was to share the White House with herself! He must have been on his way to the old home — and now he was dead and buried!

Ulrica set about to prepare for the long journey to B. For years she had not left the neighborhood of her secluded home. Rumors had come to her that railroads had been built along which iron monsters breathing out smoke and fire drew huge coaches at

terrific speed, but not for the world would she intrust her safety to such a hideous contrivance. Better acquainted, then, was she with the post chaise; but as these were routed far from her home in the White House, she must needs travel on foot, as her parents and ancestors had done before her.

The city of B. was five hours' distance from the village of Sagehorn where she lived. Early the next morning Ulrica set out, and as she had no friends in B., she planned to make the round trip that day, even if she should not reach home before late in the evening. She dressed warmly, therefore, and packed a basket full of provisions for the journey, thoughtfully adding an extra pair of shoes and stockings so as to appear as tidy as possible before

the gentlemen of the courthouse, who might otherwise suspect that both she and her deceased brother were poverty-stricken, thriftless persons. As she trudged along the road, she kept hoping that she would not encounter the iron monster with its smoke and fumes suggestive of the evil one. But she was doomed to disappointment, for just as she was approaching the suburb of B. the black monster came crashing and snorting from an opening in the mountain and exhaling a vast volume of smoke.

Petrified from fear, Ulrica could only stand and gape as it appeared to bear right down upon her. But just as disaster seemed inevitable, it switched off to one side and disappeared.

"Did you ever see the like!" Ulrica exclaimed under her breath. "The

hideous thing is dragging along with it a whole string of little houses. It must have snatched them upon the other side of the mountain. There is the black hole from which it came."

As Ulrica proceeded on her way, she mused upon the strange sight, shrewdly suspecting that there must be a more rational explanation than the one that had occurred to her, though try as she would, she could not fathom the mystery.

By this time she had entered the city where kindly disposed persons directed her to the courthouse. Here there was as much stir and bustle as in a dove-cote. Ulrica had some difficulty to find a quiet corner where she could set down her basket, put on clean stockings and shoes, and remove the stains of travel from her dress. There was

more coming and going in this place in fifteen minutes than in an entire year at home. Letting her basket remain in the corner, she advanced into the hall where she waited patiently until her name should be called by the fine gentleman at the desk in front.

At last someone called: "Miss Ulrica Bredenberg!" and not without some inward quaking she advanced to the desk. Here she was informed that her brother had recently arrived from Australia; and as he was sick, he had been removed to a hospital where he had shortly died after having named her as his sole heir. Ulrica stood listening to all this in silence, scarcely knowing whether she would have been glad to have her brother alive, or if she were sorry, now that he was dead. All these many years she had lived the life of a

recluse in her great White House, her sole companions an old man-servant and an equally old maid. Round about here, her large estate lay as a huge burial ground containing all that she had prized in youth and even her youth itself. The passing of time had leveled the green mounds and dulled her hopes and ambitions; for she had lived for herself alone, giving no thought to the joys and sorrows of others, until now her lonely old heart was encrusted by the rust of selfishness and indifference. She was one of those unhappy mortals of whom it is written:

"Woe him whom death o'ertakes to find
Not one sweet deed of kindness done:
A shattered pitcher whence mankind
No cooling draught hath quaffed — not one!"

The announcement of her brother's death, therefore, left her heart practi-

cally untouched. But as she prided herself on being honorable in her dealings, she determined to pay any debts left by him.

"Are there any bills for hospital care or funeral expenses?" she inquired. "I am ready to make payment in full."

The fine gentlemen eyed her curiously as one of them said: "We have not summoned you to settle his accounts but to assume the inheritance he left you as his sole legatee."

"He did leave something, then?" she inquired. "Is it in such shape that I can take it with me?"

"Certainly it is," was the reply. "Here it is, $120,000 in drafts and letters of credit, and besides some gold coins that remained after paying hospital and funeral expenses. You are a lucky woman, and we congratulate you."

Old Ulrica could not believe her ears. Her brother, who had been considered a ne'er-do-well, had died a rich man! It seemed impossible. Poor brother, he had come home only to die, and she, it seemed, was entitled to his wealth! She did not notice that the eyes of all were turned upon her as if enjoying her amazement and awaiting an outburst of joy and gratitude. To judge from her appearance, the old woman seemed rather poverty-stricken, and such a sudden access of wealth must be a tremendous incident in her life.

But strange to say, no manifestation of joy was forthcoming; and when the money was proffered her, she thrust it violently aside declaring sharply: "I'll not take the money! Do with it what you please."

Now it was the gentlemen's turn to be astonished. A poor old woman who refused an inheritance which to her must seem colossal! Wonderingly they wipe their glasses the better to observe such a prodigy.

"But, my dear lady?" one of them remonstrated, "money is something for which you can always find some use."

"No use, whatever!" she exclaimed. "I have more than enough for food and clothing, and every nook and cranny of my house is packed with furniture. I won't be bothered by any more money than I already have!"

No amount of persuasion seemed to have any effect on Ulrica. Repeatedly the gentlemen assured her that they had no right to the money, and that she must take it with her.

"That I will not!" she positively de-

clared. "There are so many evil-minded persons who would rob and kill me for the money on my way home. What use have I of this wretched money? Tell me that! Deposit it in the savings bank, you say? Very well, then, if you will arrange the matter for me so that I will not be bothered with it."

To her intense relief and pleasure one of the gentlemen, the president of a savings bank, promised to take the matter in hand and send her a depositor's book from the bank.

"A depositor's book!" she exclaimed. "I'd be afraid to keep it in the house! I'll thank you to keep that for me, too."

The gentlemen shake their heads over her ignorance in money affairs, but finally prevail upon her to accept $48.00 so that there would be a round sum to deposit in the bank.

With manifest reluctance Ulrica accepted the money, muttering, "I have more money than I need already. What shall I do with $48.00?"

But thanking the gentlemen for their kindness in lifting off this heavy burden from her shoulders, she turned to leave the room, a look of relief and pleasure lighting up her wrinkled old face.

A new cause for anxiety, however, awaited her. When she reached the corner where she had so carefully deposited her basket of provisions, she discovered that it was gone, stolen!

"Who would think that there were such wicked people in the world?" sighed Ulrica, who a moment before had been ready to relinquish a fortune, but who now severely felt the loss of her basket.

Away in a city where all were strangers, ready to rob her of life and property! But first she must visit her brother's grave. Upon inquiry she learned that it would take her an hour to reach the cemetery, so she decided to postpone her visit until some other time, as she was growing anxious to start for home. She had no desire to prolong her stay in the city any longer than necessary. The very houses that lined the narrow streets seemed ready to topple down upon her. Oh, that she were only safely home again! To think that she had been lured so far from home on an errand that concerned her so little. For the last twenty years she had not strayed far beyond the limits of her own estate. She fondly hoped that she would reach it again before nightfall.

As she proceeded on her way, she took no notice of the shop windows with their alluring attractions; she had no eye for the fresh biscuits and shining sausages that might have supplied her with a hearty meal; no craving for food assailed her; one desire only filled her heart — to get away from the terrible city and to reach home in safety.

So she trudged on and on through the seemingly endless streets. Surely, the city seemed larger now! Would she never reach the country? With a sigh of relief she reached the outskirts of the city at last. Trees began to appear, and here and there a patch of potatoes; but somehow the way seemed unfamiliar. Pangs of hunger began to assail her, her feet grew leaden as she dragged them along the highway, and to cap the climax of her troubles,

the evening twilight was setting in, while as yet the road stretched endlessly before her!

II.

"Keep thy garments free from stain,
And thy hand and heart alway!
Fear thy God, and e'er refrain
From desires that lead astray."

In the suburbs of B., where the houses were few and scattered, a small cottage was occupied by superintendent Gahn and his large family. Though still called superintendent he was so only in name. Formerly he had managed a large estate, but the owner had gone into bankruptcy, and now for a year past Mr. Gahn had found himself without steady employment and often without bread. He had tried to obtain positions on other estates, but no

one seemed willing to make room for a man with a wife and eight children. So he had moved to B. in hopes of better opportunities for work. But even here ill fortune seemed to pursue him. Odd jobs here and there furnished a scant and uncertain means of support for his large family. No wonder, then, that care and sorrow were sprinkling his hair with gray, and causing his steps to grow heavy and lagging. His splendid wife and dear children exerted themselves to keep his courage up, but try as they would, the anxious question kept thrusting itself upon them: "How are we going to manage for a living?"

Was it, perhaps, the same question that cast a gloom over the countenance of eight-year-old Anna? Ordinarily she was all smiles and sunshine, but

to-day her eyes had a furtive look. She started and grew pale and red by turns, if anyone addressed her. What could have changed her so?

The following will possibly serve as an answer to the question. All the children in Anna's school had agreed to send a letter of congratulation to their teacher on her approaching birthday, and for this purpose each was to furnish a fine sheet of linen paper costing five cents.

Anna together with a girl friend somewhat older than herself had gone to the book store to make her purchase, but had there discovered writing paper ever so much finer and prettier than that which they had come to secure. These finer sheets, however, cost ten cents a piece. While the two girls lingered over their purchase, the store-

keeper turned away from them to wait on other customers.

"Come," said Anna's friend, "let us take this fine paper instead of the other."

"But I have only five cents," Anna declared.

"So have I," whispered her naughty friend, "But that makes no difference. All we have to do is to place the fine paper between the folds of the cheaper. The man will never notice it, and we will get two sheets for the price of one."

"But that would be stealing!" whispered Anna, startled by her friend's proposal.

"What of it? He would never mind the loss."

"But stealing is sin," Anna persisted.

"Sin? What nonsense! It can't be sin to afford your teacher a pleasure."

"But I am so afraid!" said Anna with a shudder. "What if Mr. Frisk should notice it?"

"Then we will tell him that we didn't know there were two sheets."

"But, Sophy, then we would be lying as well as stealing," Anna quavered.

Just then Mr. Frisk came up to the children and inquired pleasantly: "Well, my little friends, have you found what you were looking for?"

Sophy nodded and said: "Yes, we want these two sheets. Please wrap them up at once, as we have waited here longer than we should."

Poor Anna stood as if rooted to the floor. But Sophy sent her a sharp look and said: "Come, Anna, hand over your money!"

With trembling hand Anna placed her coin upon the counter. Mr. Frisk handed over the package with a friendly nod, and Sophy caught Anna by the arm and dragged her forcibly from the store. When they were safely in the street Anna began to cry and declare brokenly: "I don't want the fine paper! Please, Sophy, let me return it to Mr. Frisk!"

"No you don't!" mocked Sophy. "Now it's done, and we are the gainers. And let me tell you one thing, Anna, if you ever say a word about this to anyone, something terrible is going to happen to you."

"What will happen?" was Anna's anxious question.

"You'll soon find out! Besides, I'll tell the teacher that you received help

in your writing lessons. So you had better keep mum."

Anna was no heroine and was, therefore, easily silenced by the more resolute Sophy.

Sophy left her with a parting threat: "Now don't go about with a long face as if you had killed somebody. You know what you'll get if you give us away."

Poor little Anna tried to control her feelings, but the stolen paper burned her hand as she carried it, and frantic with dread she rushed back to Sophy crying: "Take it, Sophy, take it! I can't keep it. Mama would find out in a minute — she knows how much money I had."

"Give it here, then!" snapped Sophy. "It isn't going to bother me any."

Sadly and with lagging steps Anna

started for home. How gladly would she have unburdened her heart to her mother, but she dared not betray her friend — dared not become a tattler. At home she sat down to write her letter of congratulation with quaking heart, but tear after tear rolled down her cheeks and made ugly blots upon the paper. Full of sympathy, her mother offered her another coin to buy some more paper, but this Anna absolutely refused to do. Never, never, would she set her foot inside Mr. Frisk's store again; never could she look him in the face, for he would be sure to read in her own face that she was a thief. A more terrible day Anna had never spent. She could not even eat her supper but went to bed early, followed by many anxious inquiries from her mother if she were sick or felt

a pain anywhere. Her cheeks were glowing red, and the good-night kiss she gave her mother was burning hot. O, if she only dared to tell the whole sad tale! Then all would be well again, and she would willingly suffer any punishment to be rid of the awful anguish that filled her heart. But if she told, something awful would happen, and besides, it is shameful to betray a friend. All the school children would point her out as a tattler.

"Say your prayer now, my child," urged the mother, "and the good angels will watch over you while you sleep."

Trembling, Anna folded her hands and began:

"I am weary and would sleep
In Thy care, O Father dear;
For Thine eye its watch doth keep
Over all both far and near.
If I've sinned this day, forgive" —

Poor little Anna thrust a corner of the quilt in her mouth to keep from crying aloud. Well she knew the sin she had committed, and the only atonement of which she seemed capable was tears. For the first time in her life she had something to conceal, something she could not even tell her mother. Tearfully musing on this, she fell at length into a troubled sleep.

The next morning did not bring the sunshine back into her life. Her teacher's birthday and the pleasant words she spoke to Anna only served to increase her wretchedness; and Sophy's threatening glances were like darts piercing her heart. Suddenly it occurred to her that if she could place ten cents on Mr. Frisk's counter without his knowledge, full atonement would be made. But how was she to get the money?

She had heard that other children sometimes went without their breakfast in order to secure a little spending money, but she doubted if her mother would agree to such a plan, and at any rate she would be sure to ask what her little girl wanted the money for. No, she must hit upon some other plan. All this worry and anxiety, however, left their marks on Anna's face, which grew pale and haggard. It was fortunate that her mother was so busy that day that she did not notice this state of affairs. Anna dreaded the approach of night, and the thought of bed and evening prayers.

But just at dusk a fortunate circumstance caused Anna to forget her troubles for a time at least. An old woman came staggering by the house and stopped to lean against the wall as if

unable to proceed. Full of pity, Anna had been watching her from the window, and when the exhausted wanderer seemed about to fall, Anna rushed out and lent her the support of her frail arms. Then she darted back into the house to fetch a chair. With a sigh that was almost a groan the old woman sank into the chair saying feebly, "Not another step can I take. Haven't you some coffee and food to give me?"

Attracted by Anna's actions, Mrs. Gahn now appeared upon the scene, and seeing that the pale old woman was about to faint, she said kindly: "Come, let me help you into the house where you can rest and refresh yourself with some food."

The old woman, who seemed rather sullen, readily accepted the invitation.

Anna and her mother conducted her into a chamber where she could lie down and rest a while. Presently fragrant coffee and buttered rolls were brought in, which Ulrica — for it was she — greedily consumed without a word of thanks. On the contrary, when she had finished her repast, she remarked grouchily: "That butter is adulterated and not fit to eat."

Dumb with amazement, Mrs. Gahn could only stand and look at her strange guest.

"What a shabby little room this is!" the genial guest continued. "I wouldn't want to live in a place like this."

Mrs. Gahn admitted that her quarters were rather narrow, and that she had often wished for better accommodations for herself and children.

"How many children have you?" Ulrica snapped.

"Eight," was the reply.

"And how many rooms?"

"Three."

"What, three rooms! Not even enough to house eight cattle!" the woman retorted.

In such pleasant manner Ulrica entertained her hostess, who was secretly wondering when the strange guest would get up and depart. Suddenly Mrs. Gahn noticed that the old woman had fallen asleep so soundly that it seemed a pity to wake her. Where was she bound for so late in the day? She had told them that she was from the country, and a total stranger in the city. No doubt, the long walk had been too much for the old woman. Mrs. Gahn prepared a bed for her guest, which

she could the more easily do as her husband would be away for the night, and Anna would have to crowd in with the other children. Silently Ulrica accepted all these services as if they were nothing more than her due.

Pretending to sleep, she slyly watched Anna's preparation for bed. As for herself, she kept her clothes on, only removing her shoes, remarking as she lay down: "I hope to goodness I'll not be robbed during the night!"

Terror-stricken, Anna began to moan and sob, for the old woman had eyed her so sharply, as if she had already discovered that Anna was a thief. Had Mr. Frisk told her, or had she read it in Anna's face? That night, too the poor little girl sobbed herself to sleep.

The next morning Ulrica again accepted the kindly services and food of

Mrs. Gahn, but without the least show of gratitude. When she had finished her breakfast, she inquired for the nearest road to Sagehorn.

"Sagehorn?" Mrs. Gahn exclaimed. "If you are going to Sagehorn, you must go back through the city. Is it the village or the mill of Sagehorn that you are bound for?"

"Neither," snapped the old woman. "I live in the White House."

"O, I see," Mrs. Gahn replied. "You are working there, I suppose."

After a moment's hesitation Ulrica nodded assent.

"Then you can travel half of the way by railroad," Mrs. Gahn remarked.

"By railroad!" cried the old woman. "A contraption of the evil one! I hope I know better than to commit such a sin. Only set me on my way home,

and I'll be thankful that I haven't fallen into the hands of bandits in this wicked city."

Such were the thanks Ulrica returned for kindly services rendered. With a sigh of relief Mrs. Gahn sent Anna to guide her on the right road to Sagehorn.

It was Sunday morning, and Anna was glad that she would escape going to church, for she feared that the minister would be sure to point her out as a thief.

Almost cringingly she walked along by Ulrica's side, little suspecting that her companion's sharp old eyes saw much more than Anna wanted them to see. When they had left the city behind, Ulrica asked in a tone of unusual gentleness what was the matter with her little companion. Instantly Anna

noticed the chance, and as instantly did her troubled heart respond to it. All the while the poor little girl had been seeking some loving heart into which she might pour her troubles, and she felt instinctively that, sullen though her companion seemed, she was at heart of a kindly disposition. Besides, Anna reflected, her old companion lived so far away that Anna's sad story would not be likely to return to cause her trouble.

When Ulrica put her question, they were resting a moment by the wayside. Sudden tears sprung into Anna's eyes, she flung her arms closely about her old companion's neck and poured out the sad story of her sin. Never before had Ulrica felt the soft touch of a child's arms about her neck, never before had she looked so deeply into eyes

pleading for loving sympathy. In an instant her crusty old nature became soft as wax, and she was ready to mingle her tears with those of the little girl, though the whole matter seemed to her so trivial and childish.

"There, there, my little friend," she said soothingly, "you have only to repay the man for his loss. Here, take this and pay him, and I am sure he will be satisfied."

Thereupon she slipped into Anna's hand a wonderfully large gold coin, the like of which she had never before seen. The little girl eyed the shining coin with some misgivings. She would much rather have gotten a 25-cent piece. But the strange woman had said that all would be well, and Anna trusted in her word. At the moment of parting Ulrica patted Anna's soft cheek

with calloused hand and bade her a friendly farewell. Anna hastened back toward the city, while Ulrica plodded thoughtfully on her way.

It being Sunday, Mr. Frisk's store was closed, so Anna had to wait until the next day. She had made up her mind to place the coin on the counter and slip out without saying a word, but this plan failed, for Mr. Frisk saw her enter and came forward to inquire what she wish to buy. Then the whole sad story burst form her quivering lips, or rather her own part in it, for she did not implicate Sophy. Then she tendered Mr. Frisk the coin wrapped in paper, and begged him to forgive her.

Without looking at it, the good man took the coin saying: "There, my dear, we will let the matter rest and forget all about it; but you must never do

so again! Think how sad your parents would be if they knew."

No, never, never would she do so any more! Oh, what anguish she had suffered because of that wretched sheet of paper! But now even the good Lord would know that she had made atonement for her sin. Oh, she loved the good old lady who had helped her! Now all would be well. Sophy could do her no harm, for she had not betrayed her, and no one would ever bring the matter up to trouble her again.

Where had Anna obtained the twenty dollar gold piece? Page 43.

III.

"For good thoughts open wide
The chamber of thy heart.
There sin may not abide;
Bid evil to depart!"

Poor little Anna, however, was doomed to disappointment. For on the afternoon of that same day a very solemn Mr. Frisk called on Anna's mother. After a long consultation apart, Anna was summoned. Her poor little heart almost stopped beating from fear. Alas, for the wretched sheet of paper that still persisted in haunting her. But the mother touched only lightly upon this. A much more serious matter required a satisfactory explanation. Where had Anna obtained the twenty dollar gold piece?

So it was twenty dollars! The thought made Anna breathless. Such

unheard of wealth had never before been in her possession! Without evasion she related how she had received it from the old woman who had visited them.

"She must have made a mistake," Mrs. Gahn declared. "It is unnatural to suppose that a poor old servant woman would be giving away so much money. I will see to it that the money is returned to her."

It troubled Anna to think that Mr. Frisk was not to be paid for the sheet of paper, but he declared that he was content to let the matter rest without payment.

"Fetch the paper, Anna," Mrs. Gahn directed. "Perhaps Mr. Frisk will be good enough to take it back."

Now, at last, the truth must out! Rather than another attempt at con-

cealment or falsehood Anna would gladly suffer all the evil Sophy had threatened her with. So Anna made a clean breast of it, and Sophy's share in the theft was at last revealed.

"Sophy is a bad girl," Mrs. Gahn declared.

"And she will come to a bad end, I fear," Mr. Frisk added.

With quaking heart Anna stood awaiting the reproach and punishment she felt that she so richly deserved; but her mother only said: "My poor little girl, you have already received your punishment, and I am sure you will never again be guilty of taking what does not belong to you."

"Never, never again!" was the silent vow in Anna's heart. What a burden was lifted from her heart! How bright the sun; how blue the sky! Spring was

coming, and Anna had never been so happy in her life.

On the following day Mrs. Gahn set out by rail and on foot to pay a visit at Sagehorn. She had often heard people speak of the White House. A rich old lady was said to be living there, a woman who never associated with her neighbors, never had a kind word for anyone, and never invited anyone into her house. When Mrs. Gahn came in sight of the place, she was astonished to see how large the house was.

"To think," she exclaimed under her breath, "that a lone old woman occupies a mansion like that! If our family of ten only had one fourth of the accommodations of that house, we would be happy indeed!"

She knocked at the door, and after a moment's waiting was admitted by

Ulrica herself, who eyed her visitor with far from friendly looks.

"Haven't I always said," she muttered under her breath, "that there isn't a living soul free from meanness and self-seeking! Here this woman comes to demand payment for the small services she rendered me."

Mrs. Gahn was not invited to be seated, so she inquired rather timidly if Ulrica had time to see her a moment, and if her mistress would be displeased if she received a stranger. These words caused a wonderful change in Ulrica's attitude; and her wrinkled old face lit up with pleasure when Mrs. Gahn produced the gold coin, saying that she had come to return it, as a mistake had evidently been made in giving it to Anna.

"Who says that a mistake was made?" Ulrica demanded.

"My reason tells me," Mrs. Gahn replied, "that a servant is hardly in a position to give a twenty-dollar gold piece to a child."

"Mm! I see! But you had fed and housed me, you know," Ulrica suggested.

"If I had wanted pay for that, I would have told you so," Mrs. Gahn declared. "We are always glad when the good Lord gives us an opportunity to do a small service to anyone."

A close observer would have noted the flash of joy that illumined Ulrica's face at these words, but all she said was: "Would you like to look over the White House?"

"Gladly," Mrs. Gahn replied, "if your mistress would not object."

"My mistress!" Ulrica cried scornfully. "Never you mind my mistress, but come along!"

Mrs. Gahn was shocked by Ulrica's harshness, but yielded to a desire to examine the house. What large chambers and roomy corridors, and, oh, what a splendid kitchen! And to think that all these comforts were enjoyed by a lone old woman! Not without a feeling of envy Mrs. Gahn viewed the splendor of the place. She saw the green trees peeping in through the open windows; she took deep breaths of the balmy spring breezes, and thought sadly of the three small bare rooms where her own family of ten must live and work and eat and sleep. But when she looked out through the window and observed the flower beds, the blooming fruit trees with twitter-

ing birds flitting from branch to branch, her feelings overpowered her, and she leaned her head upon the window sill and wept.

"What's the matter with you?" Ulrica asked harshly.

"Pardon my foolish tears," sobbed Mrs. Gahn. "But my heart grows sad and bitter when I see all these comforts and beauties of nature apparently going to waste, and remember that every inch of space in my own little home is filled to overflowing by my own dear children and our poor belongings. You can't imagine what it would mean to my children if they had a garden like this one! How I would like to see them flit about among trees and flowers as the happy birds are doing now! As it is, the street is their only playground."

"Why don't you buy a home in the country, then?" Ulrica asked curtly.

"It takes money to buy a home," sighed Mrs. Gahn. "Try as he will, my poor husband can hardly earn enough to keep us in food and clothing. The city doesn't agree with him, as until recently he has lived all his life in the country, and would like nothing better than to return to it. But who will give a home and work to a man with a wife and eight children?"

Having grown calmer, Mrs. Gahn accompanied Ulrica on a further tour of inspection. At last she could not refrain from exclaiming: "Why don't you make butter and cheese here? And why don't you keep a vegetable garden and put all these acres and acres of idle land under cultivation? It would be a great source of income to your mistress."

"She has more money now than she knows what to do with," snapped Ulrica.

"So!" exclaimed Mrs. Gahn incredulously.

"Yes, she has," Ulrica retorted. "There are piles and piles of money hid away in old stockings and battered chests all over the house."

"How happy and contented she must be!" sighed Mrs. Gahn.

"Who?"

"Why, your mistress, Miss Bredenberg, of course."

"She, happy and contented!" hissed Ulrica scornfully. "That old witch is as mean and grumpy as she can be. Why, there isn't a person in the world that she can get along with because she is so cross and ugly. A withered old

hag like that — how to you suppose she could be content and happy?"

"Overwhelmed and terrified by words so full of bitterness, Mrs. Gahn could only exclaim: "But aren't you speaking of your mistress, Miss Bredenberg?"

"Of course, I am," Ulrica declared.

"But certainly you must have much to thank her for!" Mrs. Gahn contended.

"I have nothing in the world to thank her for!" Ulrica retorted. "She has never shown me or any other person any kindness, and has never known a day of happiness in her life. So far as I know she has never uttered a kind word to a living soul!"

Ulrica had spoken so eagerly that she did not notice that Mrs. Gahn now stood confronting her with eyes that

flashed angrily, and to her utter amazement she was now overwhelmed by a flood of angry words.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself!" Mrs. Gahn cried. "You who are tottering on the brink of the grave, you do not hesitate to slander your mistress before a perfect stranger. What you have told me cannot be true, and even if it is, you who have served her so long should be the last one to repeat it. Have you entirely forgotten the fourth commandment in your catechism? My little Anna could tell you that we are commanded not to despise our superiors, but to speak well of them. I want nothing more to do with you! I pity your rich old mistress as well as yourself. The mistress who is served by hateful, slandering servants is poor indeed, even if she does live in a grand

"Good-bye to you, and I hope you will have a change of heart before it is too late." Page 57.

house surrounded by all the beauties of nature. Good-bye to you, and I hope you will have a change of héart before it is too late."

With these words Mrs. Gahn rushed from the house. When the gate latch clicked, Ulrica, who all this time had stood there silent and dazed, straightened up and burst, as never before, into a peal of merry, joyous laughter.

"I am free to confess," she murmured, "that I have never been spoken to with such frankness before. Why, I actually believe that she left the gold coin behind her! That speaks well of her, I must say. They must really be nice people to give a poor servant woman food and a night's lodging without any expectation of reward. The little girl, too, is a sweet child, and need not have cried her eyes out over a wretched

sheet of paper. And the mother is an honest soul to come all this way to return that miserable coin. But what I liked best of all was that she told me the naked truth to my face, and even grew angry because I slandered Miss Bredenberg, that is, myself! That was fine of her, and I richly deserved what I got! What good is the White House or all my wealth to me when there is no one in the world to love me or to miss me when I'm gone? My two servants, of course, are well enough, but they are paid for what they do, and do no more than they are paid for. All this wealth, and not a penny of it can I take with me when I die. Nor do I want to, for I have never really cared for the trash. Trouble and worry it has cost me, and not a single moment of real happiness. And who is

to get it all when my time comes? The woman told me that I was tottering on the brink of the grave. It's high time, then, that I was thinking about the future, about the salvation of my soul!"

Within eight days Miss Ulrica Bredenberg again made her appearance in the city. Ordinarily years elapsed between her visits. Again she sought the courthouse and the savings bank where the inheritance from her brother was deposited. All were kind and considerate to the strange woman who tried her best to refuse a fortune. After a lengthy consultation official looking papers were drawn up and properly signed and sealed. While this was taking place Ulrica's old face grew brighter and happier, and the learned gentlemen grew more cordial. After all was

finished, Ulrica had a private word with the president of the savings bank. A listener might have heard the words, "May 22nd", and, "a large, roomy wagon", expressions which seemed to have nothing to do with the business of a savings bank.

Cordially the gentlemen bade her farewell; and as she departed, she overheard the following bit of conversation:

"She seems a great deal younger than she did two weeks ago."

"Yes, indeed, happiness makes us all younger."

Ulrica turned with a pleasant nod to the men and withdrew through the door.

Shortly thereafter she knocked at the door of the Gahn cottage. Mrs. Gahn opened the door and somewhat coldly

inquired what she could do for her visitor.

"You intimated, I believe, that it would do your children good to have a whiff of fresh country air, and so I have come to ask you if you will let Anna stay with me over the Whitsunday vacation days."

Shaking her head, Mrs. Gahn replied: "I am much obliged to you for the invitation, which, I feel sure, you mean as a kindness; but I am afraid it can't be done."

"Why not, I should like to know? Ulrica asked somewhat sharply.

After a moment's hesitation Mrs. Gahn replied soberly: "I'll be frank with you. I am unwilling to intrust my child to one who would be likely to teach her evil thoughts or words."

"I see," replied Ulrica, "and you

fear that I am the one to do that. But let me promise you one thing: Anna shall take no harm at my hands. You told me yourself that I was tottering on the brink of the grave. Listen, then! I will make Anna my heir. All that I have shall be hers when I die."

Mrs. Gahn extended her hand as if to ward off a threatening evil, and said: "I thank you for your good intentions, but I can't intrust my child to your hands. Her soul is more precious than all your belongings, for what would it profit my little girl to gain the whole world, and lose her soul?"

Sadly Ulrica made ready to depart, but turned to say: "I will not waste any more words on you, but I—we will meet again."

So Ulrica departed, while Mrs. Gahn stood there wondering if the

parting words concealed a threat. Or perhaps the harsh words were uttered to conceal tender feelings and disappointed hopes!

Had she unjustly wounded the feelings of the strange old woman?

IV.

"Far from all the world's wild turmoil
In my peaceful home I live
Love and bliss as blushing roses
Me their fragrance freely give."

A bright and lovely day in May! In the Gahn cottage all the members of the family are in commotion. Word had come from the president of the city savings bank that he would arrive at 9 o'clock that morning with two large wagons to transport the entire family to the White House at Sagehorn where matters of importance were to be transacted.

What could it all mean? Or what had they done? Even little Elsa, not yet two years old, was to go along! What in the world was about to take place? Mr. Gahn had called upon the president to obtain particulars, but he had departed none the wiser, except that he was advised to have his family ready at the appointed time.

"Miss Bredenberg's reputation as a good woman is none the best," remarked Mrs. Gahn.

"Yes, I've heard queer stories about her," admitted her husband. "But we will have to let matters take their course. The trip costs us nothing, and the worst that can happen is that we have a little outing in the country on this beautiful May day."

Promptly at 9 o'clock the expedition set out; twelve persons in all, for the

president was accompanied by an official looking gentleman with a white necktie. These two together with the four oldest children occupied the first conveyance, while the parents and the four younger filled the second.

"Apparently the gentlemen wish to avoid questions," remarked Mr. Gahn. His wife was much perturbed. She felt that a crisis in their lives had come. Was it to be for better or worse?

When at length they came opposite to the extensive tract surrounding the White House, the farmer instincts of Mr. Gahn asserted themselves.

"Look at that!" he cried. "Fields and meadows gone to weeds; the orchard neglected and trees untrimmed. Such mismanagement is a disgrace to anyone."

"But look at the flower beds and the

beautiful bird house!" cried one of the children.

"Ill-kept like the rest!" Mr. Gahn retorted. "Miss Bredenberg does not seem to have taken much pains with her beautiful estate. Just think what could be done with it by a man who knew his business."

By this time they had turned in through the gates and stopped before the main entrance to the White House. It was not Ulrica but another old woman who met them at the door and conducted them into the large living room. Here chairs were set out for the entire company. An air of expectancy seemed to prevail. Ulrica was sitting in the far corner of the room. Mrs. Gahn with Elsa on her arm stepped forward to greet her, her eyes the while vainly searching for the mistress of the

house. Little Anna, who had just discovered her old friend, rushed forward and climbing into her lap wound her arms about Ulrica's neck, while the latter silently stroked the flaxen hair of the little girl.

When all were seated the president called upon the other gentleman, a notary, to read the document he held in his hand. Breathless silence followed. The document was brief, but so great a change did it work in the destinies of the Gahns that years seemed to have elapsed since they entered the room. Was it really the same old sun that shone in upon them, or was it a radiance from heaven itself? Was the garden, bathed in the May sunshine, a bit of paradise, and was the White House sedately occupying its stable position or capering about in circles?

Yes, the White House was indeed stationary, though by virtue of the document it had changed owners. It now was the property of little Anna to be held in trust by her father until she became of legal age.

So stunning was the news as to be unbelievable as yet! But where was the donor of this magnificent gift? The president explained that she was an elderly lady without legal heirs, and that this deed of gift was an expression of her positive desire in the matter. She only reserved for herself the right to occupy together with her maid two rooms in the east wing of the house.

"But where is she now?" Mrs. Gahn stammered.

"There!" the president declared dramatically, pointing a finger at Ulrica whose wrinkled old face shone as if transfigured.

"You — you!" gasped Mrs. Gahn.

"You — you," echoed Ulrica extending her hand, "you told me the naked truth and won my heart!"

"And you are not a poor servant woman?" stammered Mrs. Gahn incredulously.

"It was you who imagined that," declared Ulrica. "Just the same, every word I said was true, for Miss Bredenberg was as low and mean as I declared her to be."

"Low and mean — never!" declared Mrs. Gahn, flushing with shame that she had ever harbored such thoughts of Ulrica. "But how did you ever come to think about a plan like this?"

"Well, you see it was like this," Ulrica declared. "I heard you express a desire for a home of your own, and the White House has always been a burden

that I would gladly be rid of. When you were unwilling to give Anna to me, a thought occurred to me: 'Better all than none at all!"

Again Mrs. Gahn blushed furiously as she stammered: "But now that I know you for what you really are, Anna is free to come and live with you."

"And so I hope she will," Ulrica declared, and leading Mrs. Gahn aside out of earshot of the children, she added: "You see, I'm going to try to be good. Hitherto I have loved neither God nor man, but if God prolongs my life I want you to teach me to do both. By judicious inquiries I have learned that your husband is an expert farm manager who will soon place the estate on a paying basis; and that you are a good Christian woman and the mother of well-trained, dutiful chil-

dren. Then the thought occurred to me that I owed it to the White House that the patter of little feet and the merry laughter of children should be heard within its old walls. As for myself, when I want quiet and seclusion I will withdraw to my own rooms in the east wing."

"As for you," continued Ulrica, turning to Mr. Gahn, "I leave you in full charge of the estate. Whatever is lacking in worshop or stable — and for years the estate has been sadly mismanaged — I will supply from my private funds which are more than ample for my few remaining years."

"Yes," the president remarked in an undertone to the notary, "she has never set any store by money, and now she is pouring it out with both hands. I would never have consented to the

transfer of the estate, had I not reserved for her own use the $120,000 deposited in my bank."

The notary nodded and said: "Stranger things than this have happened, and the White House might have fallen into less worthy hands."

The surcharged hearts, the transport of happiness, the deep sense of gratitude to God — all this can only be realized by those whom God has granted a home of their own, or whose hearts are so filled with love that they can rejoice in the good fortunes of their fellow men as though they were their own.

As one in a dream, Mr. Gahn strolled about through orchard, barnyard and fields, musing as he went: "Can it really be true that I am at last to eat my own bread in my own house!

How I will work for them all! The strength and courage of youth has come back to me."

Meanwhile Mrs. Gahn was roaming over the house, she, too, musing: "In these rooms my children will sleep, in those, work and play; in this light, cheerful kitchen I will prepare the meals, and by that vine-draped window I will sit and do my sewing. Dear God, I am unworthy of all Thy goodness and mercy!"

Then the mother followed her children out into the grounds surrounding the White House.

"See, mama," cried one, "aren't those lilies of the valley? And there is a cherry tree all covered with white flowers, and I do believe there are small cherries, too."

"Nonsense!" declared another scorn-

fully. "There aren't any white cherries."

Joyous exclamations are heard from all sides: "Mama, there is a bed of forget-me-nots! Aren't these acorns, mama? Oh, see the birdhouse! Sh! I see a little young one peeping out through that little window. O, mama, don't these flowers smell sweet!"

As in a trance the mother sees and hears it all. She laughs and weeps by turn and presses the children, one after the other, to her heart. Then she hastens to Ulrica and clasps her in a close lingering embrace, the mother heart of her too full for words of gratitude.

And Ulrica? For the first time in many long, weary years large tears — tears of joy and gladness — trickle down her wrinkled cheeks.

"Children, children!" she cried.

"My course is almost run, and I am just beginning to know what life means! For more than thirty years lonely and poor, and now, oh, how rich! To think that I never knew that there were so many good people in the world! Anna, my own dear child, where are you?"

Wonderingly Anna hastened to her side. All that the little girl could understand was that she and the others were to live here always, and that her parents were very happy.

"Anna, my brave and honest little girl," said Ulrica, "you will try to love me a little, won't you? Come, read to me something from the Good Book; it's time that I were learning what it has to say to me!"

"Go fetch the Bible from the shelf in the other room," whispered the

mother, "and turn to the 84th psalm."

Anna complied, and while the other children were wandering about the grounds, she recited in a clear voice the sacred words to old Ulrica, who reclined in her armchair with hands devoutly folded.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee."

"Amen! So be it!" murmured Ulrica Bredenberg.

DAVID

("*Greater love hath no man - -*")

BY

A. WOLLMAR

The mother was sitting in her lowly cottage home sadly resting her head against the open palms of her hands while unshed tears glimmered in her eyes. David, her only child, stood before her urgently pleading: "Dear mama, here is the picture of the flood; please tell me again the story about how I was saved from the water."

But to-day the mother does not look up, nor is she in the mood to repeat the story.

Perhaps, dear children, you would like to know who David was; where he lived; why his mother was so sad; and what later happened to her little boy?

From your study of geography you, no doubt, know that the river Weser flows through a long stretch of northern Germany and empties into the North Sea. But you may not have learned that the Weser is a naughty, unreliable river that often leaves its bed and overflows its banks causing havoc and destruction to the fields and villages along its course. It is a fearful sight to see the mighty flood burst from its banks. Hardly a house is then left standing, and the poor villagers must flee in terror to higher ground to escape a watery grave. Many are the victims swept away to their death when such a flood sets in.

To curb this turbulent river great dikes of earth and rock have been built along the dangerous stretches of its course. These dikes are higher than

the ordinary high water mark of the river, and behind these the inhabitants live in comparative safety. But not always! Occasionally when the mountain snows to the south melt suddenly, the river rises higher and higher and sweeps onward as if eager to pour its waters into the sea. But in the north winter still reigns, and thick ice covers the river hindering its flow. Then dangerous ice gorges are formed, damming the river bed and hurling great cakes of ice against the dikes. If these break, ruin and death follows in the wake of the flood.

The small village in which David's parents lived was situated about a mile from the river behind one of the great dikes that line its banks. One spring, when David was still an infant, the Weser had risen to the danger point

by the breaking up and gorging of the ice. Day and night the villagers kept guard on the dikes, repairing the breaks, strengthening weak points, and increasing its height with sandbags. Then one evening Mr. Kohler, David's father and a tailor by trade, came home from his turn of duty on the dike, satisfied that all danger was past.

"We can sleep in peace to-night," he declared. "The river is high, but it will not overflow the dike this time."

No, over the dike it did not flow, but it had discovered a weak spot in the dike, and against this it hurled its mass of water and ice until the dike tottered and broke in spite of the frantic efforts of the villagers. At midnight Kohler was awakened by the alarm bell from the church tower only to find his house surrounded by the

flood which was already sweeping over his threshold.

"Climb to the garret!" he cried wading knee deep to arouse his wife. All chance of flight was gone. Together the parents carried David in his cradle up the garret stairs; and when the house tottered at the onslaught of the flood, they continued their climb to the roof. There they sat trembling with fear and cold while all about them houses toppled, men and women shrieked, and cattle, bawling frightfully, were swept away into the night. Still the flood continued to rise. Wave upon wave dashed against the frail cottage; if it gave way all three seemed doomed to certain death.

Suddenly Mr. Kohler heard the bleat of his goat struggling for life in the water. He was just reaching out

his hand to pull it to safety upon the roof when the crest of the flood struck the house. It tottered and collapsed flinging the occupants of the roof into the water where they sank just as a rescuing boat appeared upon the scene.

When Mr. Kohler and his wife regained consciousness, they found themselves safely in the village church, which, standing on rising ground, had escaped the fury of the flood.

But where was David? Had no one seen and rescued their child? Was their little baby boy now sleeping the sleep that knows no waking, and would his little body be found when the wild flood receded?

So the poor parents waited as the flood slowly abated. By midday all further danger was past, the dikes were hastily repaired, and the Weser, still

rumbling angrily, was confined within its banks.

The Kohlers had suffered a loss of all their possessions, and yet this catastrophe they esteemed as less than nothing in comparison with the loss of little David.

Imagine their joy, then, when that evening some men, who had searched the river valley far and wide in hopes of rescuing people in distress, returned triumphantly with David and placed him safe and sound in the arms of his happy parents.

Lying in his cradle, David had been carried as in a boat on the crest of the flood to a low hill covered with blackthorn bushes now almost submerged by the waters. A blackthorn had just opened its eyes to the call of spring and was peeping out from the water

when it beheld the cradle with its precious burden sailing by. Eagerly the bush reached out its arms and held the cradle fast. David lay fast asleep in his cozy bed, but when the sun's bright eye looked down on him, he awoke and began to cry, and it was long past time for his morning meal. But unfortunately the blackthorn had no food to give him. It could only gently rock the cradle until David's eyes again closed in sleep. Toward evening the bush observed two men approaching. It ceased to rock the cradle. David awoke and began to cry lustily for the meals he had been deprived of since the night before. Thus it came about that David was discovered and restored to his overjoyed parents. Many an eye grew moist with tears, and all agreed

that God's good angels had watched over and preserved the child.

"Surely," the father often declared, "David will amount to something in life, otherwise he would not have been saved as by a miracle from the flood!"

This was the story that David wished his mother to tell, and that he never tired of hearing. But to-day the mother could not tell it; she could only weep, for David's father had died a few days before leaving the wife and mother almost heartbroken.

"May David become something better than a tailor like his father!" the father had sighed even on his deathbed. Gladly would he have given his child the best in life, but now death would deprive him of a father's privilege to plan and labor for his son.

The bereaved wife treasured her hus-

band's dying words and often sighed: "My poor little lad, you have no one but your mother now, but mother will do her very best to care for you."

Mrs. Kohler was a strong and capable woman, and not afraid of work. And, indeed, it was necessary for her to work untiringly in order to support herself and David. She soon discovered, however, that by spinning she could not make both ends meet, so she became a washerwoman. There were many families in the village that gladly employed Mrs. Kohler to do their washing. This, of course, made it necessary for mother and son to be separated from each other many days out of the week, for she had to depart while David still lay asleep and did not return until sundown. This was a great hardship to both David and his

mother, however much Mrs. Daniels, a kind neighbor of theirs, endeavored to care for the boy while the mother was away. The one bright day of the week was Sunday. When David then awoke, breakfast was cooking on the stove, and he would heartily partake of the meal, drinking real coffee from a cup with a gold stripe around the rim. Then the mother would help him put on his Sunday best, and at nine o'clock they would go hand in hand to church where there was so much to see and hear that he seldom fell asleep. Then there was the Sunday dinner, the best meal of the week, when David would beguile his mother with spirited accounts of the week's happenings. If the afternoon was fine, they would take a long walk through field and forest. On rainy Sundays the large illustrated

family Bible was brought forth, and the mother would relate the grand old sacred stories to her son. Best of all David liked the story of King David.

"Mother," he would ask, "how small was David? Was he as big as I? Will I be a king, too, when I have killed all the Philistines?"

"There are no Philistines now," the mother informed him; "and besides, Jesus bids us to love all our fellow men."

"Will I be a king if I love all my fellow men?" David persisted.

"No, my child, you know very well that we have a king."

"But what will I be then?"

"A good and upright man, I trust," replied the mother, "but this only if you are very, very good."

To be good and obedient, that was a

lesson dinned into David's ears daily, and, indeed, he tried to learn that lesson well. But there were other things he wished to learn. Often he cast longing eyes at the children coming from the school across the village street from his window. How he yearned to become one of them!

One day he suddenly resolved to go to school. So he picked up a piece of slate fallen from the roof and joined the other school children without saying a word to anyone. The kind old schoolmaster he already knew, and of him he was not afraid. But to-day the master eyed him wonderingly.

"Well, David my lad," he asked, "what do you want to do at school?"

"Write," declared David calmly, seating himself among the other children.

"You, three cheeses high! You are too small, I am afraid."

David did not understand about the cheeses, but he understood that somehow he didn't belong there. He wished to say something real convincing to prove the contrary, but he could only sob dolefully.

"You know my father is dead."

"Yes, poor lad," the master replied, "and your mother is away all day long at her work. Well, if you will sit real still, you may stay."

So it came about that David began school when he was only four years old. When school was out, he would often remain with his teacher, take long walks with him along the dikes, help him in his garden, or amuse himself in his chamber. Stirring were the ac-

counts he had to tell his mother of his adventures, when evening came.

So seven years passed. David was much taller now, and though not a strong and robust boy, he was the pride and joy of his mother's heart. If she at times grew sad, the thought of her son consoled her, as with him by her side she was not entirely alone in the world. To the old schoolmaster David was as a son, making such marked progress in his studies that his teacher often declared that there was nothing more that he could teach him, and that David ought to continue his studies in an advanced school. Nothing would have delighted David more, for he was very fond of his books and had talents for study.

Mrs. Kohler often thought of her husband's dying wish that David

should become something better than a tailor, and one day she mentioned this to the schoolmaster.

"My dear Mrs. Kohler," the old man warned, "remember that the greatest thing that David can become is a child of God."

"Yes, of course," Mrs. Kohler replied; "but as God saved him so miraculously from the flood, he must intend to make something great of him."

"Perhaps," the old man said, "God saved his life in order to make it serve some good purpose to others. David has a kind and loving heart, and the Good Book says, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' "

It was on a raw, cold day of spring that David celebrated his eleventh birthday. In honor of the day his

mother had remained home from work. Their little home was cozy and warm, but no warmer than the hearts of mother and son. For on this very day David had successfully passed his entrance examinations to the high school, and after the Easter recess he would take up his studies there.

"God willing," his old friend, the schoolmaster, declared, "you will some day enter the university."

David passed his birthday as in a dream. For next to mother and teacher his best friends in all the world were his books. With his mind's eye he saw before him a pleasing vista of happy school days when he would delve deeply into the lore of books, and then, one day, he would become a teacher, or a doctor, or perhaps a pastor! His mother, he firmly resolved, should live with

him and never do another day's work in her life! He would be the one to work, and mother would sit all day long in an easy-chair enjoying the ease and quiet she had so richly earned. How happy they would live their lives together!

Thus mother and son sat silently musing upon the future. At last the former broke the silence to say: "Oh, if your father had lived to see this day!"

There was a sudden knock at the door, and their neighbor, Mrs. Daniels, stepped in.

"David," she said, "will you do something for me, if it isn't asking too much of you on your birthday?"

"What is it?" David inquired, springing up from his chair.

"Perhaps you know that my husband

is doing guard duty on the dikes to-day?" answered Mrs. Daniels.

"Is the water very high?" Mrs. Kohler inquired.

"No, not too high; but there is much ice in the river, and the men must keep a watchful eye on the dikes. My husband is on duty till twelve o'clock to-night. I have prepared a warm lunch which I would like to have David bring him. It's so cold out there by the river."

"Yes," said David's mother hesitating, "and it is already growing dark."

"That makes no difference, mother," David declared. "I will go at once and be back in time for supper."

"No, my boy," objected Mrs. Daniels, "you must eat first, for it's a long way going and coming, and you need a warm meal before you set out."

So David hastily ate his supper and prepared to depart upon his errand. His mother was quite reluctant to let him go — perhaps because it was his birthday. But it did not occur to either mother or son to refuse the request of their kind neighbor. So David put on his warm coat, picked up the lunch pail, and hurried off saying: "Good-bye, mother! I'll be back in two hours."

Left alone, Mrs. Kohler was plunged into a happy reverie, utterly forgetful of the biting cold without and the danger threatening from the river. Warmth and sunshine filled her heart, and happy memories bloomed like fragrant blossoms in her soul. She opened the battered old chest in a corner and from a drawer plucked a withered wreath — her bridal crown

of long ago. O, if *he* were only with her now! If he could only know what a great and learned man their David was to become! In fancy she already saw her son in the pulpit and heard the winged words of his sermon. The church was packed with people, but she sat humbly in a corner, an attentive listener. It would not do for her to crowd to the front, for was not the pastor her own son David? Mother joy and pride almost overwhelmed her at the thought. But sounding persistently through her reveries were the sacred words that David loved to repeat: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Suddenly the clock struck eight. The sound recalled Mrs. Kohler to the actualities of life. She replaced the

myrtle wreath and delved deeper into the contents of the chest. There on the very bottom lay a number of silver dollars, bright and shining as the mother love that had toiled so hard to earn them. Piece by piece she let them glide through her fingers with never a thought of her chapped hands and bent back. Joy and pride were the emotions that filled her heart. Her David was not entirely without means. There was money here for books and clothing for her boy. And what she had done for him in the past, she would still be able to do for him in years to come. For him no labor was too heavy, no sacrifice too great. The time would come, so he had solemnly declared, when her busy hands would rest, when he would work for her. Again she lost herself in bright dreams of happi-

ness to come. The light from the lamp grew dim, it flickered and died out, but she did not notice it, for sleep had overtaken her where she sat waiting — waiting.

Round about her stillness and darkness reigned.

Meanwhile, where was David? Hurrying along as fast as he could, he quickly reached the place on the dike where his neighbor Daniels stood on guard. The hot lunch had grown cold, but this was soon remedied over the fire blazing on the dike. A shrill whistle summoned the nearest guards who hurried up with chattering teeth and joined their neighbor in the warm and grateful refreshments. On the dikes everything seemed safe and in good order. The river was still slowly rising, but no danger was apprehended.

"You are a fine lad, David, and I am much obliged to you," said Mr. Daniels as he prepared to resume his turn on guard.

"O David," called one of the men, "my beat is on your way home. Take a look at it as you go by so that I can stay here awhile and warm my chilled bones at the fire."

David readily promised to do so. The moon had risen and was spreading its pale light over the swelling water, the great dikes, and the lone boy homeward bound. By this time he was chilled through; it was foolish of him, he realized, to have lingered so long near the fire. Nevertheless he was true to his promise to keep an eye on the dike for any sign of crumbling or fissure. Well he knew that even the smallest crack might cause ruin and

disaster to the entire river valley. The story of his own miraculous rescue from the flood was too deeply impressed upon his mind to allow him to forget even for a moment the danger that threatened. But that night all seemed safe, and David, too, as his mother at home, began to dream golden dreams of the future. First years of faithful study, then a home of his own in which his dear mother should reign, while he as doctor or pastor was helping his fellow men by word and deed.

Suddenly foot and thought both came to an abrupt halt. A sound of trickling water came to him through the night. A hasty examination revealed a narrow crack through which a pencil of water spurted down the side of the dike. David pressed his hand to the crack and stopped the flow.

What was he now to do? Well he knew how rapidly the water would enlarge the fissure if left unchecked. A single hour would suffice for the flood to burst its way through the dike and bury beneath its raging torrent the fields and villages throughout the valley. Alas, that such a calamity again threatened his mother, his beloved old teacher, and all his friends and neighbors!

Some way must be found to avert the danger. But what could he do? Again he pressed his hand against the crack, then sprang upon the dike and called frantically for help. But no one heeded his call, and he could find nothing to fill the gap. Wherever he looked water and frozen ground alone met his gaze. He hastened back only to find to his horror that now the water

poured forth so strongly that he could not stem it with his hand. Desperately he jerked off his coat and crammed it into the opening. Then he again rushed along the dike toward the watchfire calling aloud for help. But no one heard him. O, if he only had a signal whistle to summon aid! At the thought he thrust his stiff fingers into his mouth and whistled shrilly. Still no response! He dared not remain longer away from the point of danger. Returning, he found that the pressure of the water had forced the coat from the crack. Again he crammed it home and leaned his back against it to keep it in place. That helped, and the flow stopped. Only within the dike he seemed to hear the faint rumble of water.

No guard came to his aid, or heard

his cry for help. There was nothing, then, for him to do but to remain — to endure the cold that was creeping to the very marrow of his bones. As his strength waned, a sudden panic seized him, and he was about to leap up and hasten home. But no! The flood would burst the dike and sooner than himself reach his mother, his dear mother all unaware of the threatening danger. Fighting thus for strength and courage, he heard the clock in the church tower strike eight. Above him the twinkling stars of heaven seemed to whisper to his soul: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Sudden exaltation swept over him. No longer could he fold his hands, but from his heart arose a prayer to God: "Help me, God, to endure the

cold, to keep the water back till help arrives, even if I die."

With dimming eyes he noticed that the flow had stopped. His head sank upon his brave breast. He was so tired; he must sleep awhile. —

There was a knock at the cottage door, and Mrs. Kohler started from her sleep. Several men stepped into the room. As yet but half awake, she sat and stared at them. Suddenly with a cry of anguish she saw that they were bringing her son, her David! After repreated explanations by the men it slowly dawned on her that the guards had found David frozen to death in a gap in the dike. The coat which David's slender body had held in place had stopped the flow, and her brave boy had given his life to save his mother and the rest.

The anguished cries of the mother could not call to life her heroic son, her life's sole joy and treasure. Sleeping, he had gone to be with Jesus, who had given His life for him.

The people of the village streamed to the poor washerwoman's home. All wished to cast a last look on David and in their hearts to thank him for the greatest of all sacrifices that he had made. Sorrowing they stood beside the mortal remains of the brave young lad whose love had proved itself stronger than death itself.

"He has not lived in vain," sobbed the old schoolmaster, "and has in truth become something great! He has preached to us all a sermon on love such as no one else."

On earth the brightness and the joy of life had departed from the heart of

David's mother. But this she knew, that in a higher life she would again be with her son, if, like him, she persisted in a life of sacrifice and love.

On the simple tombstone over David's grave are inscribed the words:

"Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life
for his friends."

What Came of Patty's Prayer

PART I.

"Dear me! I should *so* love to live in the country; do you think we *ever* might, Patty?"

Patty Dinsmore, with face between her hands, seemed away off somewhere in thought, as Daisy Dare, her twin, suddenly asked the question in a wistful tone. The two had lived, since they could first remember, with their grandmother, in a large tenement house, high above the narrow street on which it opened.

They had never known the joy of a yard, not even a tiny plot of ground belonged to the tenement, front or back—

only a brick stair led down to the pavement. Here, they often sat, on long afternoons with Grannie's permission, drinking in what little of fresh air floated down the narrow street between buildings. "Dear me!" Patty at last spoke, using Daisy's very expression unconsciously. "I think so, Daisy, though it seems no nearer at present. We must keep on hoping, you know, Daisy Dare."

"If just a fairy godmother might come, Patty; all in a chariot you know — with bells ringing, and a footman to climb down and throw the door wide for us — Granny first, of course, then, you and I, following, Patty — to ride away — away."

Daisy paused breathless; her fairy dream growing so fast, that words for the moment failed her.

"You little goosie," Patty was not sober now, "you have been reading too much lately. There *aren't* any fairy godmothers in the world, really, Daisy Dare — just in books, you know." Then she, too, paused, wishing that Daisy's imaginative tale might be true.

"I would so love to see Granny in a black silk though, looking the real lady that she is!" Daisy had been groping for some comforting words from Patty, for she depended upon her cheery twin to encourage her in the wonderful dreams that they had so often planned on the old tenement steps together, with only a tiny space of blue sky smiling down from above.

"But there *are* such things as godmothers, Patty — there isn't any use *at all* for you to try and make me believe that there *aren't*—only last night,

Granny was telling me of one we had when we were babies, and so, of course, we can't remember; but she *lived* all the same, and Granny said she had been her best friend and that she was rich, and sweet and loving — and O! lots of things I can't remember now; I got sleepy about that time, but the last thing I remember her saying was, that we had lost her, and she had lost us, when we sailed away off over here. *There,* Patty, *you* were asleep, and did not hear; but it was *all* true, and there *are* godmothers—see?" Patty nodded, as Daisy Dare gave her a sudden punch to "make sure" she was not sleeping right then, and to arouse her into an answer.

"Of course, Daisy Dare; I never said there weren't, you know; I only said that about fairy godmothers —

the kind that ride in golden chariots — *that* kind that you have been reading about in your fairy book!"

Long after Daisy had gone in, Patty sat on watching the dusk creep into the street, and the familiar figures coming by from their work, homeward bound, with light step; for even though the surrounding alleys were crowded, after all it was "home" they were going to! The little girl on the step gave each a bright smile and nod of greeting, as they passed, for her heart was full of love for all.

"I wish each of you might have a lovely place to live some day — dear people," she half whispered, "and *sometime* I'm sure you shall, even if you have to wait until you get to Heaven." Patty paused, then turned her face upward, toward the twinkling

stars that shone so high and far away, between the tall buildings. There was a puzzling conflict going on within her brain for sometime Patty's heart questioned "why?"

It would be so lovely to live far off in green fields somewhere; in the country where Granny and Daisy so longed to go; and to be able to take all of the tired people that she had learned to care for, as they passed each evening to and fro. She had been so engrossed with the thought that she failed to hear a footstep nearby, until a gentle hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"A penny for your thoughts, dear," Grandmother Dinsmore said: "Are you star-gazing, my child? Daisy has finished her supper and gone to bed, while I have been waiting for you."

"Oh, Granny, I'm sorry to have kept

you; you see, I have been wishing — wishes — out here, for you, and Daisy, and my poor people."

"Little kind heart! — your good thoughts have engaged you so long a time; then small wonder you forgot the everyday world."

"They may not have been good, Granny; I was wondering too why some people have *so* much and others so — *little*. It seems to be so unfair."

Grandmother Dinsmore was silent then, and she too looked up to the far-away stars before answering.

" 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want —' 'My times are in Thy hands.' Patty, dear, promise me that you will not *forget* those beautiful words." Then very quietly she turned, and left her; the little old lady whose faith had never failed through all the long years.

Alone, Patty dropped her head — Granny was right — they were all *His* people, not hers — His green fields, and flowers, and birds, and love; the Good Shepherd who cared so tenderly for His sheep. Daisy and Patty had just been studying the psalm! Suddenly a sweet smile lit up Patty's face. She knew what to do *now,* and every night that was to come. The little girl clasped her hands together joyously, for she was not afraid any more!

PART II.

"Patty, you seem so happy these days — almost as if you knew a lovely secret that you are hiding from Granny and me to burst out with some day, and surprise us."

Patty Dinsmore smiled across the

table at Daisy, as she suddenly laid her book down to look over and make the remark. "I *am* happy, Daisy Dare — why not? Aren't people usually happy when they look for good things to 'turn up,' Granny?"

"Yes, dear —," the old lady paused in her work by the window to look over at the children at the table — one wide-eyed and questioning, the other content in doing the small task she had set about to accomplish.

"I think Patty might tell us, if she knows a secret — don't you, Granny?"

"I'm willing to wait, dear."

Daisy Dinsmore sighed.

"That makes me think of a story in here," she said, laying down her book. "There were two girls, one lived in a grand palace, but nothing seemed to make her happy, while the other one,

who lived in a cottage across the road, was always cheerful. 'How do you keep so happy on *so* little?' the girl from the castle asked one day, as they met outside the gates. 'I'm always expecting something good to 'turn up'; while in the meantime I am content in doing the small daily tasks. The world has its beautiful side, why not live on the side toward joy?' The girl of the castle was silent; she looked down at her silken robe, and then to the other's simple gown. 'Let us exchange,' she said, 'and you live *my* life awhile, and *I* live yours.' But, the other one shook her head quickly. 'We were only meant to live our *own* lives,' she replied, 'and to be content. Come, follow me through my task to-day— then, perhaps to-morrow, you will be ready to pick up *your* part, and go on alone!' "

Daisy paused, and put aside the book.

"I hope the girl of the castle found the 'Joy Road' too — do you think she did, Granny?"

"I think she did, Daisy Dare—those who seek in the right way usually find worth-while things, and in doing for others, forget self, and live content. Your story was a worth-while one."

Patty, her bright face bent eagerly above her work, nodded a silent acquiescence, as Daisy started up quickly.

"I think I'll put away the dishes now, Granny — and I'll 'make believe' they are fairy cups and saucers, and that the way to the kitchen is rose-strewn. I think that will make the little task — *beautiful.*" Grandmother Dinsmore laughingly agreed, as Daisy waved a triumphant good-bye from the doorway.

"I'm glad you think she found the joy-road, Granny — very glad — and Patty is, too, I know, though she hasn't said so!"

Then, with waiter, fairy cups and all, held aloft, Daisy Dinsmore disappeared.

. . . . . .

"Oh, Patty, do you remember that afternoon when I was wishing *so* for great things to happen? Please shake me, Patty, right away, or else I'm afraid it may be a dream!" Daisy and Patty Dinsmore were on deck of the 'Falcon,' on their way to England, and the little girls found it hard to believe, though Granny had explained many times.

"I'll shake you, Daisy Dare, though there isn't any use, for you are *not* dreaming *at all!*"

Two weeks before, Grandmother Dinsmore had received a letter from across the water, from the very old friend — of whom she had told Daisy their godmother, whom, after Granny's coming to America, she had lost sight of. The letter explained, how seven years before, at the time they left, she had read of the loss of the ship they were on, and believed that all had sunk with her. Then she had gone away to India, and Grandmother Dinsmore's letters had never reached her, telling of how she, Patty and Daisy had been rescued by a passing ship, and brought on over. She was overjoyed at the news on reaching home, after a lapse of so many years, and was writing for her friend and little god-daughters to come over at once, as she was left alone in the world, with an ample support, and

needed companionship sorely. Then had followed the letter saying they would come, and Patty and Daisy, wild with delight, flew around helping Granny all they could. At last, though, everything was finished, and with smiles and tears, too, they had set out from the old tenement house to embark on the "Falcon," and sail away across the ocean.

After Patty granted Daisy's request, and she was quite sure that she was not dreaming, she spoke again.

"I wonder if the chariot and footman will meet us, Patty — and our godmother; I told you that godmothers were *real,* and *now,* you see, ours has come to life, and — everything is going to — be gorgeous!"

"I meant *fairy* ones, though, Daisy Dare; but I don't believe that even

your happiest fairy tale could be more lovely than our *real* story."

"I don't believe so either — there'll be green trees, and big gardens full of flowers, purple and gold pansies, Granny says; row after row, bordering the brick walks, and birds too, Patty, that sing when one first opens her eyes, until the sun goes down in the west; it seems we have found the 'Joy Road,' too, as did the girl at the castle gate."

Patty, with the old-time gesture, dropped her face between her hands, and looked wistfully across the water.

"*We* have found it, Daisy Dare — oh, how I wish that all my dear people might have found it too! When I said something like that to Granny once, I remember, she talked to me of the Good Shepherd, who watches over all, so if they aren't in the 'Joy Road' now,

they will be some day. I prayed every night that Granny — and you and I, might sometime live where the trees and flowers and green things grew, and it *has* come; don't you see?"

Daisy nodded her head. "It came of your prayer, Patty; sometimes, when you thought I was asleep, I could hear you speaking softly to God." The little girls looked into each other's eyes understandingly.

"We shall not forget *that,* Daisy, shall we? And we'll do our little tasks, and share our happiness with others in England as well as in America."

"Yes," Daisy Dinsmore agreed, "we'll share our Joy-lit way!"

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